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Review of *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Queerness*

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Maus, Fred Everett, and Sheila Whiteley, editors; Tavia Nyong'o and Zoe C. Sherman, associate editors. 2022. *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Queerness.* New York: Oxford University Press.

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It is with great pleasure that I offer my thoughts and considerations regarding *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Queerness*. I would like to start by commending the editors for the breadth of this collection and for completing such a comprehensive project. The passing of one of the original editors, Sheila Whiteley, delayed work on the book, and I commend the surviving editors, who worked to reconceptualize, broaden, and reconfigure the project after the loss of their colleague. I begin my review with this point because some of the most important aspects of the intersection of music with queerness are community, the material experiences of people with non-normative genders and sexualities, and the social. In this context, I cannot help but think that this volume comes just in time to help us critique, revive, and renew our scholarly and community endeavors, arriving as it does at a moment when the kinds of studies found in this volume—humanistic, non-normative, and focused on gender and sexuality—are under increasing attack in the Western academy and in Western societies. What does it mean to engage a collection on music and queerness at a moment when music departments are being shuttered and when humanistic inquiry is being denigrated as having no use in our technocratic society? What does it mean to champion queerness as a legitimate field of study when attacks on trans people are a foundational part of the assault on hard-won queer rights across liberal societies in the Western world? How might we read this text in an environment where projects such as this are increasingly difficult or even impossible to pursue? Might this collection soon appear on a list of banned books? While I cannot answer these questions definitively, I pose them as an opening salvo to speak to the critical work that this collection does in creating a dialog that, one hopes, will expand scholarship on this topic.

The collection's introduction begins by not assuming the meanings of the terms that frame its essays. The editors acknowledge that there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes "queerness" or the study of "music," and in my estimation, the collection is richer for this choice. Another of the editors' inclusive moves was to resist the assumption that all readers would have the same understanding of what a collection on music and queerness should look like. Instead, they made a deliberate choice to sit with the contingent, the incomplete, and the possible. In the introduction, the editors speak both to the utility of the term "queer" as a frame for anti-normativity and to the ways that this word comes from a particular time and place, one that must be carefully considered when using it in other times and places. For me, acknowledging the contingent and unfinished nature of the word "queer" allows the book's chapters to invoke this term in a variety of ways, thinking through the meaning of queerness in various time periods and non-Western, non-White, and non-elite contexts. The editors were also careful to consider what is meant by the word "music," challenging the bias toward Western art music that often permeates discussions about what counts as music in academic institutions. While the editors position themselves as music scholars in the Western academy and acknowledge that the volume contains numerous chapters on Western art music, they have made a deliberate attempt to decenter this music in the collection. These maneuvers leave open the opportunity for readers to examine and engage the

relationship between music and queerness in its most expansive possibilities. The book's introduction concludes with an overview of the formation of queer music studies as a field, alongside an explanation of how the authors organized the chapters around "approaches," "styles of thought," or "rhetorics," rather than chronology and geography. What is interesting about this choice is that as one reads through the volume, one can see how certain essays could have fit into more than section. The editors organized the book in this way, I think, because they wanted to sit with the impossibility of finding a hegemonic or accepted configuration of queer music studies. As editor Fred Everett Maus argues, "the most accurate 'conception of the field' is that it is characterized by diversification of topics and methods, ever-increasingly so" (14). The editors made two other critical decisions: to accept essays of varying length, including ones by scholars outside the academy; and to encourage scholars to submit their most recent and innovative work, rather than rehashing established interventions. This approach allowed for a wide-ranging, inclusive collection, but it also must have posed a challenge in organization. The choice to group the essays by rhetorics or approaches produced some interesting and provocative conversations, which I will highlight below.

Before moving into my commentary about the book, I would like to share a few points of information about myself, so that my reading practice is transparent. I am a scholar trained in an interdisciplinary department who uses music as a lens for studying the relationship among culture, society, and Blackness (particularly in the Global South). As someone outside the audience for traditional music research, I consider myself to be exactly the kind of scholar that this volume, with its expansive and inclusive definitions of music and queerness, might speak to. Perhaps that is why I am so excited for this collection, which makes a concerted effort to expand the fields it engages, to address itself to both academic and non-academic audiences, and to prioritize new work and new approaches. In what follows, I discuss each of the volume's six sections. As I do so, I comment on the authors' approaches and highlight some of the standout chapters. I then conclude with some thoughts about what research inspired by this collection might look like. I want to be clear that any of the essays included in this edited collection could have been engaged further, highlighted, and discussed in detail. The chapters I have chosen to address are ones that I found particularly provocative and that spoke to me in interesting ways about how one might approach queer music studies. While I make a sincere effort to offer as comprehensive a reading as possible, the reader must recognize that the full breadth of this collection could not be contained in a single review. This essay does not provide an exhaustive account of the collection but rather highlights the ways that its chapters can be useful to scholars and non-scholars thinking about these topics as they pursue their own engagements with music and queerness.

KINDS OF MUSIC

In the book's first section, the editors remind us that queer folk have always been associated with specific music genres and scenes (which, as in the title of this section, they refer to as "kinds of music"). For example, we readily associate queerness (or at least queer men) with electronic dance musics but less often with rock or country. This section speaks expansively about genre and scene, revealing queer participation in various kinds of music, only some of which are commonly seen as having queer audiences and practitioners. From my perspective, what is most interesting here are references to kinds of music where queer presence may be minimal or not particularly visible.

One example is the fascinating ethnography of queer performers in Irish traditional music in the chapter by Tes Slominski, titled "Queer as Trad: LGBTQ+ Performers and Irish Traditional Music in the United States." Slominski interviewed an impressive range of practitioners in this scene from across the queer spectrum and asked them about their experiences. The chapter makes an argument about the possibilities and limitations of the Irish traditional music scene for queer practitioners, allowing us to glimpse how musicians navigate experiences of both freedom and constraint. Slominski makes several important observations, including contesting the

notion that music can, in and of itself, paper over difference. The author notes that many in the Irish trad scene treat playing this music as an "orientation," one that, in some ways, supersedes other forms of social identity. The author asks pointedly, "if sexuality doesn't matter because one's orientation toward the tunes is of utmost importance, then why are there so few openly LGBTQ+ trad musicians both in Ireland and the United States?" (95). Through the author's ethnography, we learn some of the ways that queer trad musicians navigate the paradox of operating within a seemingly open social space while also having a sense that queerness is not "traditional" and Irish trad musical practices are not "transcendent." As a result, this chapter allows us to imagine a scene that moves beyond tolerance and toward an "active recognition of difference" (103), one that recognizes the value of difference, within both a musical scene and its surrounding society. In this way, the author suggests that the active recognition of difference can create forms of national belonging that are more inclusive.

Slominski's chapter demonstrates the important political implications of queerness and music, speaking not only to inclusivity in music scenes but also to the reformulation of national and diasporic identity. What would it mean for forms of Irish nationalism and diasporic belonging to embrace the active recognition of difference? Considering this question reminds me of the important work of Audre Lorde (1984), a Black lesbian feminist who often argued against the convenient occlusion of difference in feminist and Black movements, insisting instead on the recognition of difference as crucial for the construction of enabling political futures.

A second essay in this section that is equally fascinating for its ability to look at queer people in a particular music scene is Shana Goldin-Perschbacher's "Gay Country, TransAmericana, and Queer Sincerity." This chapter examines the role of queerness in the country music scene, looking at both historical and contemporary performances by queer artists. The author develops the idea of queer sincerity, arguing that the notion of truthfulness in country music storytelling (and in the larger genre of pop music) creates a space for queer artists to develop an aesthetics of sincerity that can lead to political activism. The author contrasts the focus on queer sincerity in country music with the tendency to direct scholarly and critical attention toward "rebellious styles" (109). I found this claim particularly provocative, because the author challenges us to engage more expansively in our research and examine varieties of queer performances that may not be so visibly or obviously queer. Goldin-Perschbacher's work encourages us to look to unfamiliar spaces and a wider range of performances as we examine the relationship between queerness and music.

The essay is unique for its focus on a trans* performer in the country music genre, taking a close look at how nonbinary artist Rae Spoon handled the issue of gender nonconformity in this scene. We certainly do not have sufficient research on trans and gender-nonconforming engagements with this music, and it is refreshing to see this topic discussed. In their career, Spoon was often forced to navigate between the desire to evoke queer sincerity in their performances and the need to appeal to both mixed and non-queer audiences, particularly when touring in the Canadian prairies or other rural areas of that country. In their performances, Spoon expressed sincerity by drawing on their prairie upbringing, in some instances offering a comparison between the kinds of isolation found in "cowboy life" and the experience of queerness in rural communities. I am not sure what to make of Spoon's choice to stop playing country music after five years, citing the lack of queer-friendly and non-sexist venues, and I am fascinated by the artist's claim that they now view their past performances as a country musician as a form of performance art. Set in the context of Slominski's chapter, the Spoon case raises the question of how one can create and cultivate a space for the active recognition of difference, and Goldin-Perschbacher's chapter speaks to the ways that queer performers in country music attempt to do just that. Should we consider Spoon's disavowal of country music as a rejection of their ability to create the kinds of recognition they sought? Or should we take the view that while their music may have been meaningful for both them and their audiences, suppressing aspects of their queerness to gain acceptance took too great a toll on Spoon? And what does it mean for one's efforts to go unrealized, even as one does profound work to create a queer space within a particular music scene? I want to think through how and why Spoon might disidentify from being a country musician and what that means for our attempts as scholars to create a more inclusive vision

of what might be considered an appropriate topic of music research. This chapter also raises the question of how one might approach performances—particularly ones that involve music sound—as performance art, rather than as music. My point is not to suggest there is no distinction between performance art and music, but rather to sit with the tension between how the artist might describe their interventions and how queer audiences and scholars interested in queerness might evaluate them. The fact that Goldin-Perschbacher's essay leaves us with something to ponder is one of its great strengths.

VERSIONS

The second section in the volume considers queerness and music in relation to what the editors term "versions." Taken together, these chapters ask us to consider the full range of how queerness shows up in music studies by studying adaptations, resignifications, and intertextuality. In this section, we have opportunities to consider the choices that frame musical actors' experiences as they adapt queer representation in their music. What are the choices that communicate queerness? What would it mean to inject queerness into a text or make it more explicit? How might we interpret latent, hidden, or excised forms of queerness when an artist reworks or revises an existing piece of music? At the heart of all of this is the tension between "dissident interpretations" and the reconsideration of what queerness adds to long-standing debates about originality in music production. I am reminded of the work in both critical cultural studies and queer studies that insists on the originality of the copy and dismisses the priority of the original—a point that these authors address.

Nina Treadwell's chapter, "Queer Audiovisual Creativity: Fan-Created Music Videos from *Star Trek* to *Bad Girls*," is a standout contribution in this section. The chapter expands our understanding of the kinds of practices that might constitute an appropriate object of study in music research by focusing on and historicizing the phenomenon of fan-created music videos. Treadwell makes several interesting moves that help us to reconsider the kinds of music creation that fans pursue when they make these videos. The author's study allows us to consider seriously the queer resonance of such videos, which have often been discussed with respect to their feminist and gendered meanings but are less frequently probed for the ways that they demonstrate the queer creativity of the fans who make them. Treadwell notes that the practice of creating these fan-curated videos is known as "vidding" and that it entails a "distinctly female visual aesthetic and critical approach" (185). She provides a brief herstory of the practice, linking it closely with the early *Star Trek* fandom of science fiction conventions, which emerged in the 1970s. This brief herstory is critical, since there is often a misperception that vidding is a phenomenon that only started with YouTube; in contrast, Treadwell reveals that while the means for creating and distributing culture continue to change, vidding has a long genealogy.

Treadwell details how the foundations for queer creativity in contemporary vidding lie in the exploration of homoerotic desire between the Kirk and Spock characters in the *Star Trek* fan scene. In that earlier scene, Treadwell notes, the "slash" symbol ("/") was placed between the characters' initials to signify a homoerotic pairing (in this case, K/S). That the older videos that fans produced were often created by heterosexual women brings to my mind the links between the contemporary practices of queer creativity in vidding and in fan fiction. Vidding is a site for repurposing both sonic and visual texts, collective in nature, and creating a "myriad of musico-kaleidoscopic recombinations" (192). Further, the author draws parallels between vidding and queer as a space of critique, particularly around questions of inclusion and exclusion. Through an examination of the British television show *Bad Girls*, Treadwell reveals that the process of vidding, and its combination of stills or short clips with music, functions to create a new sonic-visual text, which serves as a form of fan-based art criticism of the original source. Treadwell argues not only that this recombination produces a new understanding of the visual material, which is read through the sonic, but also that the sonic material is reassembled and reconsidered through the visual. The author then provides two examples that detail how the use of music comments on the original visual text in ways central to the meaning of the fans' new videos. Attention to the sonic aspects of this

practice yields a greater understanding of vidding than would have been gleaned from an analysis of the visual text alone.

Karen Tongson's contribution, titled "Karaoke, Queer Theory, and Queer Performance," reminds us that the role of repetition in karaoke mirrors some of the common tropes of queer aesthetics. Linking the practice of karaoke with queer theories of performance, Tongson reveals how tropes of this aesthetic, such as "its play with surfaces, its obfuscation of originals through copies of copies, its tendency to echo the well-worn forms of love and desire, even as it makes apparent—indeed, amplifies—the cliched, normative fantasies that underlie the repetition of these conventions" (211), are also present in karaoke. Queer aesthetics and karaoke are thus symbolically connected, and understanding this allows us to ponder the queerness of karaoke as an art form. On this rendering, karaoke is engaged as a queer theoretical and aesthetic mode (212). The chapter asks us to consider how karaoke allows for the performance of a kind of amateurism, which is not presented in a negative manner here but instead depicted as a practice that plays with, rather than completely thwarts, the traditional rules of music-making. The performative repertoire of drag is connected with karaoke, in that drag (like karaoke) plays with a particular thwarting of rules, decorum, and tradition. Karaoke's proliferation in queer bars and social spaces is connected to a longer genealogy of social performance in queer nightlife venues. Ultimately, the queerness of the form itself creates a space in which queer aesthetics can flourish.

VOICES AND SOUNDS

As the collection's editors remind us, "music is made of sounds, though this knowledge is sometimes lost in academic writing" (17). The chapters in this section focus on the various ways that voices and other sounds engage queerness. This is the portion of the collection that perhaps speaks the most to the growing field of sound studies. I found all of its essays fascinating for how they engage questions of queer voicing and vocality. Stephan Pennington's essay, "Transgender Passing Guides and the Vocal Performance of Gender and Sexuality," stands out here. Pennington begins by asserting that both Western common sense and conventional modes of classical musical singing and training create an essentialized notion of gendered vocality. However, the reality for many trans folk is that they change their voices during their transitions, working with vocal therapists and linguists to align their gender identity and their voice, reduce the experience of dysphoria, and lessen the possibility of violence that can result when their voice and their outward gender expression do not match. This practice, known as vocal passing, focuses on modifying the trans person's speech and gestures to create the alignment they want to present to others.

Noteworthy for our purposes is Pennington's suggestion that an understanding and examination of trans passing guides might be instructive for those who study music, and this is because the kinds of vocal training central to Western art music are often used to help produce gendered alignment in vocality. This also means that much of the vocal training in classical music reproduces the idea "that men and women have completely different voices and are profoundly different from one another" (241). As a result, studying transgender passing guides is important in exposing the kind of naturalization of difference that is central to vocal training in classical music and denaturalizing it. This use of trans passing guides is refreshing and innovative, as it helps us rethink and reimagine the enactment of gender by cisgender vocalists who may be performing cross-gender vocal parts for aesthetic purposes or engaging particular forms of gendered common sense in their singing to enhance the performance of normative gender in ways that may depart from their typical singing voice. In this way, the author illustrates the relevance of such guides for larger aspects of music study. Pennington suggests that future scholars might use this method to examine the intersection of gender with race in vocality, such as the masculinization of African American vocalists or the feminization of Asian American vocalists. The author thus offers us a method that can provide a more expansive understanding of how we might deploy the notion of queerness in music to discuss non-queer performers and performances.

Tavia Nyong'o's chapter, "Free as a Bird? Thinking with the Grain of Meshell Ndegeocello's Butch Voice," uses queer voicing and sounding to approach a number of broad epistemological and political concerns. Nyong'o suggests that we can productively read the development of Ndegeocello's voice and musicality in relation to ideas from Black studies scholar Saidiya Hartman's 1997 book *Scenes of Subjection*, noting that both emerged around the same time and responded to the limitations and frayed edges of the US's experiment in this period with multiracial democracy. Nyong'o enters into a scholarly debate that has infused Black studies regarding the afterlives of slavery. As he recounts, scholars in this field have tended to pull two trajectories from Hartman's work. In the first trajectory, scholars in the tradition of Afro-pessimism build on Hartman's critique of liberal humanism, particularly in relation to the abolition of slavery, suggesting that its afterlives created a political economy and a set of social relations that were not drastically different from those of enslavement. In the second trajectory, scholars focus more on Hartman's methodology of critical fabulation and her use of storytelling and speculative narration as a way to account for the gaps and silences within archives, particularly in relation to enslaved people. In other words, these approaches are another means of telling the story of slavery and its afterlives. As a performance studies scholar, Nyong'o has drawn more on Hartman's work via the second trajectory, but he connects the two trends through an examination of Black performance, surfacing a debate that, while perhaps most salient to Black studies and Black musicians and performers, might have critical resonance for other minoritized groups. Does the existence of Black performance (including music) suggest that the dehumanization of slavery and its afterlives was unsuccessful? Or does posing such a question in and of itself return us to a Pollyannaish naiveté of a debunked liberal humanism? Nyong'o compares how Hartman and Ndegeocello revisit established modes of inquiry in their respective fields, with an eye toward reassessing their utility for more contemporary times.

The chapter's discussion of Ndegeocello explores how the singer used her voice, one that was polyphonic and "shapeshifting" (231), to interrogate ideas of freedom and accepted modes of masculinity, which were particularly embodied in her butch voice. Like many feminist and queer practitioners, Ndegeocello married her political commitments with the interpersonal and the intimate. In the process, Ndegeocello developed a non-normative understanding of freedom, one untethered from the "American social contract" (231), and in the process raised a set of questions imploring Black people to reconceptualize their notions of what freedom means. Discussing the ways that Ndegeocello played with the voicing of masculinity, Nyong'o argues that the singer didn't reject masculinity so much as engage it toward different and often more expansive ends. Ndegeocello's song "Leviticus: Faggot" is an example of such voicing and the queer use of masculine voicing in general. In the song, Nyong'o suggests, Ndegeocello "depicted the violence of gender norms as they get imposed upon and reproduced within the Black family by patriarchal religion expressed and endorsed by men and women" (234). In this framing, it is normative gender itself that harms and threatens Black communities, rather than acceptance and tolerance of non-normative genders and sexualities. For music scholars interested in queerness, Nyong'o's piece provides an entry into thinking about the intersection of queerness and race and how they can push our work into larger conversations about freedom, possibility, and the politics of music and performance.

LIVES

I must admit this section of the book was my favorite. This is because it so thoroughly explores the intersections of the authors' lives with music-making practices. As someone who often approaches my research through the lens of performance ethnography and autoethnography, I found the intertwining of scholars' and artists' voices with the music to be a particularly productive methodological frame. As the editors suggest, the title of this section is a bit misleading, since all of the essays included in the collection are about queer lives in some way or another. For me, the distinction here lies in the ways that many of these essays draw on the feminist framework of situated knowledge and use of the self to narrate their experience of queerness in relation to music. These

essays were also some of the most affectively rich in the collection. Further, I think of many of these chapters as pursuing forms of memory and re-memory. As I've written elsewhere (2020), musical memory and re-memory engage both the past and its effects as communal, even when they are being experienced by an individual. As the authors of this section's chapters reveal intimate aspects of their lives as a basis for scholarly observation and inquiry, they rely on memory as much as traditional field notes to create forms of affective attachments to the work, which, for me, provides a model for a queer analytical practice.

Sheila Whiteley's "Queering Brighton" is a great example of a chapter that uses this approach and centers the lives of its research participants. In this essay, Whiteley analyzes her memories of and engagement with queer performers in Brighton in order to speak to the development of the queer scene there. Whiteley's observations and her close friendships with queer male performers allow her to speak to the histories of queer music-making and performance in the city. What is most valuable in this essay are Whiteley's personal reflections on the scene, her participation in it, and her relationships with many of the queer men who animated the scene, as well as her understanding of the scene's performative nuances. Through a series of memoir-like interludes, readers are given a glimpse of the possibilities and limitations of queer life, particularly before the period of decriminalization in the UK.

In a moment where it feels like queer rights are increasingly being reconsidered and curtailed, I found Whiteley's observations to be particularly enlightening in showing the specific and creative ways that queers navigated their existence during an earlier time of repression. Through an analysis of the use of the camp aesthetics of double entendre in Polari, a queer language that developed so that queer folk could communicate with one another clandestinely, Whiteley reveals how queer content was made to hide in plain sight, known to other queers but likely missed by non-queers. While Polari was rooted in camp, Whitely emphasizes how queers in Brighton released camp from its association with gay male effeminacy, shifting it instead into "the political and transgressive repertoire of queer style and logics of excess" (317), the latter being a concept that, in feminist and queer studies, has been quite influential as a critique of normativity. Whiteley's observations also remind us of how community formation is nurtured through what Michel Foucault (1988) might have called radical practices of self-making. Here, personal narrative is the foundation for a politics of self-making that can buttress queer networks, queer friendship groups, and queer community.

Colin Andrew Lee's contribution, "Musical Awakenings: The Experience of a Queer Music Therapist in the Face of HIV and AIDS," is another contribution from this section that combines personal memory and ethnography to detail a unique experience—in this case, that of serving as a music therapist for queer men affected by HIV/AIDS at the height of the pandemic in the UK. One aspect of queer life is memorialization and loss, and this essay provides an opportunity for us to think about what loss means. How do we honor our dead? Lee's contribution suggests that, for him, one way of forging memory and honoring loss is through a consideration of the lives of the men he worked with and the ways that he helped them live and prepare for death through their experiences with music.

Lee discusses in detail his own experience of learning to be a music therapist at this time and what it meant for him to grow in his own practice, as he worked with men who were navigating what was effectively a death sentence. As he recounts, "music became for many clients, however, not just a source of increased comfort, but also a feast of creativity and expression when pain and loss were everywhere around them" (353). What I am struck by here is how practices of self-making, particularly in relation to music, are also central to reflections on the relationship between queerness and music. In the chapter, Lee is very transparent about how he, as a student practitioner, was at this time still discovering how his practice might best support his patients. Lee speaks to how the profession of music therapy has become a "safe" vocation, due to the dominance of White, middle-class women practitioners there, and he also discusses how this essay achieves its intervention by centering the experiences of a gay man and his relationship to his clinical work. Detailing the difficulties that Lee faced in his

clinical experiences, the chapter explains how music became a space of escape and how this gave him insights into the ways that music might function as a place of succor for his patients.

Here, I am reminded of the uncertainties and lack of guarantees in music, which Lee tells us is a volatile art form capable of encapsulating both the "uncertainties of living and dying, as well as the exuberance and potential of life" (355). Among those uncertainties was the challenge of not knowing the clinical outcomes of the therapy he provided, which Lee asserts was an opportunity for mutual vulnerability between him and his clients in ways that were productive and, I would add, freeing for him and the people he worked with. Detailing his experiences with four different patients, Lee reveals the differing approaches they took to music-making and creativity, including making visual art and both vocal and instrumental performance. For some of his clients, music served as a powerful mode of expression for navigating the in-between state that palliative care produced. From a methodological perspective, Lee's work grants us an opportunity to think about how we might combine autoethnography, field notes, and memoir to narrate musical lives in expansive, sensitive ways that honor our research interlocutors. For me, this piece was like an elegy, though it was written with a sense of hope and possibility, even for the men whose lives were lost, as it centers the ways these men used music to forge connections—with themselves, with the author, and with their communities. In this way, it is a powerful testament not only to the role of music in our lives but also to the ways we prepare for and experience death.

HISTORIES

This section of the collection might also be termed "pasts," as it offers chapters that think through the relationship between music and queerness at times far removed from the contemporary moment, as well as essays that examine the more recent past. Part of the aim here is to allow us to think about the limits, as well as the productive possibilities, in bringing a queer analysis to musical topics from the period before the current arrangement of gender and sexuality in the West took hold. It is the first of two sections in the collection that ask us to think critically about how we deploy the framework of queer to musical practices in situations far removed, by either time or space, from the context in which the notion of queerness first developed.

In "Music in the Margins: Queerness and the Clerical Imagination, 1200–1500," Lisa Colton draws on the notion of intertextuality, focusing on drawings of musical instruments, music-making, and sexual practices (as well as related marginal writings) that appeared in the margins of devotional books created by Catholic clerics. The author asks, "What can such musico-sexual iconography tell us about queer understandings of the human body before 1500?" (422). Considering this question, the author explains that queer practices at that time were ones that were deemed "unnatural" due to the ways they upset the patriarchal order; "essentially, any type of sex that was not monogamous, and practiced by a man and a woman, with the man 'on top,' was considered to be against the natural order" (423). Thus, a variety of gendered and sexual practices at that time, including ones we might not now consider "queer," were deemed non-normative. The author also suggests how the notion of "musical queerness" (i.e., non-normative and transgressive musical practices) might provide a useful approach to the subject of music and queerness in general. In this context, the links among music, the carnal, and the sensual, which was a common trope in the Middle Ages, can be read as a form of musical queerness.

Colton notes that many scholars have overlooked the information that the marginal images in devotional books might provide us about power, gender, sex, and sexuality in Middle Ages Europe or have interpreted their presence as offering some necessary relief from boredom. She suggests that "the manipulations of human (and non-human) bodies and instruments [in devotional marginalia] emphasize the sensual side of music itself" (428). That the trumpet is the musical instrument most often displayed in the marginalia is not surprising, as it signifies angelic heaven, comedic affect, and sexual prowess (or lack thereof). These marginalia are situated in queer spaces, literally on the margins of these books, providing a space for alternative interpretations of difference. Colton notes that these images often associated the musicality of the human body with the musicality

of an instrument and that both could be used to depict the divine or serve baser purposes. The linking of musical instruments such as bagpipes and the trumpet to the anus was a common trope in the marginalia. For Colton, an examination of these marginalia reveals a "queering of traditional hierarchies by music and by the sounding sexual body" (437). Here, I am reminded of Nyong'o's use of Hartman's concept of critical fabulation to think through historical forms of Black possibility. I would suggest that Colton's method realizes one form of queer critical fabulation, using these marginal writings and drawings to make an argument for (re)thinking queerness historically. Queer histories require a more expansive notion of archives and how to read them.

Gillian M. Rodger's "Queering Middle Class Gender in Nineteenth-Century US Theater" interprets nineteenth-century performance traditions of cross-dressing as an archive for contemporary drag. Further, Rodger suggests that today's drag descends from "cross-dressed roles present in nineteenth-century music-theatrical forms…particularly non-narrative and semi-narrative forms such as minstrelsy, circus, variety, and burlesque" (455). Rodger establishes that cross-dressing by both men and women had antecedents in European theater and other performance traditions and that the US versions that appeared later both built on and departed from their European predecessors.

Class differences in entertainment choices were important to the growth of cross-dressing female impersonators in the nineteenth-century US. Rodger shows how US performance forms began to bifurcate along class lines, with young working-class male audiences moving away from theater and toward minstrelsy and other non-narrative and semi-narrative performance genres. These genres in the US inherited the tradition of having comical female roles played by cross-dressing men, since crass comedic performances were seen to be inappropriate for women. In contrast, the glamorous female impersonator was a role that developed out of American blackface minstrelsy. Importantly, minstrelsy appeared in the US at a time of great economic and social upheaval, one marked by increasing immigration, the emancipation of enslaved people and the shifting role of women in society. As Rodger asserts, "minstrelsy offered a range of stereotypical characters that reassured the white male audience of their superiority" (459). Alongside men's blackface minstrelsy and the theatrical portrayal of Irish immigrant men, glamorous female impersonation became one of the few performance forms to express emotion and sentimentality in this period. These kinds of female impersonation would come to include camp aesthetics, relying on the humor of gesture and double entendre. Notably, these forms of cross-dressing were hardly queer, and even men who found the impersonators alluring could rest assured that as long as they performed the active role in sexual situations, their manhood and masculinity were seen to be intact. Transgressive women's performance, particularly that of the burlesque, was also key to providing sites that were decidedly not invested in respectability. Yet women also transgressed through male impersonation, often performing a repertoire not distinct from that of men in these traditions. Their appeal was not so much sexual as it was a way to shore up working-class men's construction of manhood, while also providing a space to critique and undermine the masculinity of bourgeois men.

What is interesting to me about the analysis offered in this historical examination is the way that tropes from minstrelsy have endured in contemporary American performance and entertainment, and in Western performance and entertainment more broadly. Matthew Morrison (2024) argues that minstrelsy is foundational to contemporary American popular music and the entertainment industry. Rodger's work is related, providing evidence that minstrelsy and its associated traditions of performance have been central to framing cross-dressing and drag in the US. What might it mean to reconceptualize one contemporary facet of queer performance—drag—as being deeply connected with minstrelsy and the set of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century performance forms associated with it, with all of the implications of racial and class difference that this entails? What would queering minstrelsy and racing the histories of drag mean for how we analyze these art forms today? Rodger's analysis is quite provocative and strongly challenges how we historicize drag performance, a history that, Rodger rightfully points out, has been understudied.

CROSS-CULTURAL QUEERNESS

This final section was one that I had some difficulty with, not because its chapters were less fascinating than others in the book but because I felt that it reproduced one of my biggest concerns regarding the presence of non-Western music and non-Western queerness in music studies and queer studies, respectively. In these fields, there is a tendency to silo the study of non-Western queerness and music, as well as to lump disparate cultural practices together under the framework of the "non-Western." That said, the decision to have a section on cross-cultural queerness makes sense in the context of the editors' introduction, which, as I mentioned above, discusses the tension between the value of "queer" as a way of understanding anti-normativity and the fact that the notion of queer comes from a particular time and place. Examining the applicability of queer to non-Western spaces, this section provides an opportunity to explore that tension, just as the previous section did in its consideration of the work of queerness in the historical past.

"Interdisciplinary Enqueeries from India: Moving toward a Queer Ethnomusicology," by Zoe Sherinian, is an effort to engage a theoretical and methodological conversation about what a queer ethnomusicology might entail. For Sherinian, this conversation would begin with an intense inquiry into the Western gaze that dominates queer (and music) scholarship in the West. One assertion that comes early in the chapter is that we should question whether the "Western meanings of 'queer' will match the ways of living and musicking that exist throughout the world" (525). Sherinian asks us to consider what a cross-cultural queer theory might look like, with the goal of developing a "theoretical lens that allows for local phenomena and their potential to expand global understanding of not just difference, but of human possibility" (525). I am heartened by the last portion of what Sherinian argues here, because I have long felt that while Western scholars study non-Western societies to highlight the diversity of human cultures (which is, in my opinion, a laudable goal), those societies are rarely seen as having the potential to serve as the foundational basis of our understanding of global phenomena. The non-West remains particular, and only the West retains the possibility of being able to apply to multiple, non-Western elsewheres.

Sherinian asks us to proceed with skepticism about the applicability of "queer," in both its descriptive and activist axes, when working in non-Western contexts or subcultures in the West. Here, she suggests, we should sit with "the possibility of both [a] broadly inclusive application [of the notion of queerness] and local cultural relativity" (526). Sherinian lists eight guidelines for us as researchers to consider when studying queer in non-Western contexts. In the interest of space, I will discuss only a few of these, connecting them with other critical methodological moves in the study of music and queerness and suggesting ways that they speak to larger currents in the field. Many of the conceptualizations that Sherinian asks us to consider link the study of music and queerness to the larger decolonial turn in scholarship. To be clear, the decolonial is expansive, and I am unable to rehearse the breadth of debate in that work here. Instead, I will speak to the important work of deconstructing colonial common sense, tradition, and accepted frameworks and adopting Indigenous frameworks, which has been at the center of decolonial scholarship in African feminist contexts (see, for example, Tamale 2020) and, for me, resonates with Sherinian's principles. The following guidelines speak to the decolonial:

1. "Queer ethnomusicology should not be tied to Western conceptions of gender and sexuality." (526)
2. "Queer ethnomusicology should not assume that the basic object of study will be LGBTQ-like subcultures." (527)
4. "Queer theory in ethnomusicology should respect if not prioritize and forefront indigenous conceptualizations." (527)

In addition to emphasizing the decolonial, Sherinian asks us to prioritize the intersectional. One way of doing that is by not assuming that "queer and queer-like behaviors are marginal or stigmatized in all cultures" (527). Methodologically, Sherinian advocates for an approach that keeps the ethnographer vigilant about

transference (projecting one's own ideas on the culture one studies) in the process of interpretation and writing. Through an examination of queer practices in relation to music and performance in India, the author considers how these cultural forms are often at the core of queer identity formation and materiality.

Henry Spiller's essay, "Non-ordinary Gender and Sexuality in Indonesian Performance," is noteworthy for asking if the relation between music and queerness is even operative in the location he studies. In many ways, Spiller takes up Sherinian's ideas about a queer ethnomusicology, primarily the notion that we should not assume that practices that would code as queer in a Western context necessarily do so in a non-Western one. Spiller examines various forms of Indonesian performance, thinking through what actually is queer in each one and arguing that "any queerness in these case studies is, in essence, a side effect of other factors" (559). Spiller calls for an examination of Indigenous gender ideologies in order to temper universalizing claims that scholars might make about particular cultures but also to revise generalized notions of gender and sexuality. His work "invites queer theorists to refine their analyses to decouple sexual desire from gender ideologies and biological sex in ways that will illuminate human identities" (559–560). Here, Spiller seems to be suggesting a decolonial approach that is similar to Sherinian's, in that his examination of Indonesian performance practices in relation to queerness is less about their apparent radical difference from Western forms of performance and more about showing how the study of a different sex/gender system can illuminate heretofore unexamined aspects of human experience. Spiller suggests a both/and approach to thinking about how we might analyze queerness in the case studies presented in his essay. From an Indonesian perspective, the practices of performance, gender, and sexuality in these case studies are not in and of themselves queer, although they may appear that way to Western eyes. However, their meaning also shifts as new codes of gender and sexuality emerge in contemporary Indonesian society.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This volume provides a wealth of possibilities for future research, and in closing, I will briefly delineate a few of these potential new directions. Opening up space for the most expansive consideration of queer identities and practices, the collection does not shy away from examinations of trans embodiment or the use of queer theories and methods to develop broad understandings of gender and sexuality. In this context, I would ask how we might use the examinations of music and queerness found in this book to rethink our understandings of music in relation to gender and sexuality and to develop ones that go beyond explicitly and identifiably queer bodies.

This volume also points to the salience and importance of intersectional approaches in our scholarship and practice. Thus, we might think about how an engagement with trans voicing can allow us to consider the racialized voice in music performance, such as the intersectional connections between contemporary drag performance in the US and the racialized performance of minstrelsy. Clearly, any serious examination of how queerness and music interact requires such intersectional theoretical and methodological approaches and also requires us to avoid focusing solely on White Western practices. But this is also a reminder that within a set of practices that we might call White and Western, there is room for considering intersections of class, gender, and sexuality, just to name a few.

Along these lines, there is also an opportunity to continue the provocations about place and time that the volume offers its readers. Continuing the work of this volume, we might ask, what historical periods not covered here would benefit from a careful and considered reexamination with respect to queerness? What other geographic areas might be ripe for engagement with the approaches offered here? I note that this book lacks chapters on Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, as well as discussions of minoritized Western subject positions other than Blackness. The theoretical and methodological approaches discussed in the volume should absolutely be brought to bear on additional geographic regions, time periods, and musical forms.

Ultimately, this collection does not attempt to exhaust the meaning of queerness and music, which would be an impossible task. Indeed, in a field as diverse and wide-ranging as queer studies, it would be difficult to delineate and mark all of the accepted approaches, methods, and frameworks. Instead, the collection points to a set of possibilities for approaches that could, in the future, be considered more by scholars, artists, and activists working in the field. These approaches, which I have detailed in this essay, serve as rhetorical frames and themes that speak to the provisional character of the field of queer music studies and lays out parameters for further research. It is my hope that music scholars will approach this collection with the openness, breadth, and sense of contingency that mark the field of queer studies as a whole.

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